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PLEASE RETURN MONTANA COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES NEWSLETTER

DEC



Why the Humanities?

The humanities are alive and well and living in Montana. Research is thriving, classes are filled, publications stream forth from academic corridors. Why should there be further question of the involvement of the humanities in public life?

The answer may be found in the origins of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1965. Recognizing that in our industrialized and technological society the perspectives and learning of humanists have too often been ignored, in that year Congress created the National Endowment for the Humanities to stimulate humanistic dialogue, research and debate. The primary assumption behind the Endowment's enabling act is that the academic humanist, as a specialist in the study of the values and experiences of humankind over the centuries, can bring a different kind of understanding to the necessary (but often overlooked) examination of basic assumptions and values which govern public policy discussions and decisions. Such contributions are one way of restoring the perspectives and insights of the humanities to a world threatened with domination by technology, massive organization, and an exaggerated sense of the present.

The real test of this concept came with the creation of the state-based program, established in Montana in 1972. This program placed special emphasis on the fundamental aims of dialogue, citizen involvement, and relevance of the humanities to contemporary issues. The Montana Committee for the Humanities was established as the state-based organization which administers funds from the National Endowment, reviewing proposals and making grants to nonprofit organizations for locally developed projects which involve professional humanists in a dialogue with others about issues of public policy. It is clear that the perspectives of those who ask "why"

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UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE MONTANA PUBLIC PROGRAM IN THE HUMANITIES

February

- 13 "Abortion: Should Either Churches or the State Have a Role?" Montana Forum on Church and State, LA 11, University of Montana, Missoula
- 20 "Does Political Morality Have a Religious Basis?" Montana Forum on Church and State, University Congregational Church, Missoula
- 28 Bitterroot R. C. & D., "Economic Rationality, Economic Power and the Environment," Daly School, Hamilton

March

- 2 "A Proposal for the People," film discussion of the role of minorities in the democratic process. KULR (Channel 8), Billings, 12:30 p.m.
- 3 "Amnesty for Whom? What is Just? What is Merciful?" Montana Forum on Church and State, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Missoula
- 8 "A Proposal for the People," Cable TV (Channel 6), Billings*
- 9 "A Proposal for the People," KTVQ (Channel 2), Billings, 3:30 p.m.
- 10 "Religion in Relation to Environmental Policies," Montana Forum on Church and State, Messiah Lutheran Church, Missoula
- 15 "A Proposal for the People," Cable TV (Channel 6), Billings*
- 16 "A Proposal for the People," KTVQ (Channel 2), Billings, 3:30 p.m.
- 21 Bitterroot R. C. & D., "Alternatives to the Status Quo: The Varieties of Capitalism and Socialism," Daly School, Hamilton
- 22 "A Proposal for the People," Cable TV (Channel 6), Billings*
- 29 "Toward a Contemporary Definition of Humanism," a discussion featuring University of Chicago Divinity School professor Dr. Langdon Gilkey, to be taped at 1:30 in the KGVO Studios, Missoula
- 30 "A Proposal for the People," KULR (Channel 8), Billings, 12:30 p.m.

April

- 3 "Church and State in America: Has the Separation Been Fruitful?" Montana Forum on Church and State, LA 11, University of Montana, Missoula
- 28 "The Humanist and Scientist as Power Brokers," panel discussion featuring University of Montana professors A. J. Silverman, Ron Erickson, Ron Perrin, Meyer Chessin, and John Turner; to be taped at 1:30 at the KGVO Studio, Missoula

April 29, 30

May 1, 2, 3

"Solitude and Community: Making Things Work." Wendell Berry, John Hawkes, Philip Levine, John Haines, and other writers and humanists discussing their sense of their roles in the community. English Department, University of Montana, in cooperation with the Missoula Arts Festival and the Montana Arts Council

May

- 24 "Our Responsibility to Future Generations." Professor Garrett Hardin, at the Florence Hotel, in Missoula, in conjunction with the 1974 Midwest Regional Conference of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America

*Check local listings for time

(HUMANITIES cont.)

are as necessary to the full understanding of and solution to any issue of public policy in a democracy, as the perspectives of those who can explain "how" public policy decisions can be implemented. Yet, the challenges of exploring, settling, and governing a continent have led to a substantial reliance in America on those with technical, organizational or economic expertise for guidance in public policy-making. The result has been the general exclusion of those whose basic expertise lay in the study of the values and habits of the human community—essentially the "humanists"—from any significant role in the decision-making processes.

Humanists, for their part, have collaborated in their exclusion from public life. There has been a tendency for academic humanists in America to accept the philistine view of themselves as "eggheads" and to avoid the responsibility of participating in the larger world of the community beyond academia. Too often preferring the comfort of the ivory tower to the mundane marketplace, they have thus confirmed an image of humanists as people whose knowledge is superfluous, because they have failed to demonstrate the applicability of their knowledge to contemporary problems. While priding themselves on being the custodians of the values of the culture, they have failed to relate those values to practical questions of immediate concern.

However, current issues in the human community which have seriously and adversely affected the quality of American life in recent decades—wars, political corruption, ecological disasters, the list goes on—have shown the need for a more serious examination and reconsideration of American values, assumptions, and priorities than has ever been undertaken in the past 200 years. There is a place for the humanist in this re-examination. Humanists can tell us what others have thought about the problems, as well as what moral values and considerations of logic and consistency seem to be involved. They can tell us about how other communities, past and present, have moved to solve similar problems, and how and why they have succeeded or failed. Of course, the humanist can't tell us what to decide. Clearly, the final decisions about public policies must rest with the whole community.

The state-based program in the humanities, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, is one mechanism for facilitating the coming together of the

academic humanist and the community, for the benefit of both. The humanist who is deprived of dialogue with the community beyond the ivory tower of academia is deprived of a meaningful source of education for himself. The community which is deprived of the knowledge of the humanist is spiritually and intellectually impoverished, and denied the self-regenerative influence of an important part of the human heritage.

Blackfeet Decision-Making And The Political Process

What are the similarities and differences between the political process of the Montana state legislature and Blackfeet and other Indian decision-making patterns? What does a State Senator or Representative do all day when the legislature is in session? What happens in legislative Committee hearings? How does a bill become a law? How can Indians on and off the Reservation relate to and directly affect these processes?

These and other questions will be explored and discussed by a group of Indians and other community members from various towns on the Blackfeet Reservation, who are planning a three-day trip to the legislature while it is in session in February. In Helena the MCH-sponsored group will participate in an experimental program, in which they will be joined by resource people including Senator Percy De Wolfe, Representative Gary Niles-Kimble, and State Coordinator of Indian Affairs Merle Lucas. Academic humanists Marvin Shaw and Gerry Fenn, sociologist Clark Welch, bilingual educator on the Crow Indian Reservation Wendy Visscher, and Dennis Taylor from the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences will also participate in this program.

Ms. Violet Butterfly, project director and Director of the Blackfeet Community Volunteers, observes that, "By better understanding the political process it is hoped the Blackfeet Indian people will feel more competent to make decisions which affect their lives, and to participate in the process of state government." She anticipates that those who take part in this project will exercise their leadership abilities when they return home, and will teach what they have learned to other members of the community.

Should Religious Values Influence Politics?

The questions of the separation of Church and State and how religious values enter into politics are being examined in depth in a series of discussions being held in Missoula, sponsored by the Montana Forum on Church and State and funded by the Montana Committee for the Humanities. Project Director Howard Schwartz notes that, "Religion and politics, which ordinarily occupy a very small part of our lives can, if we let them, embrace our lives totally. Many people, in many times and places, have devoted themselves completely to one or the other, or both. In the United States a commitment to religion has historically been held to be separate from a commitment to politics, a doctrine which became embedded in Constitutional restrictions against using the Church for State purposes or the State for Church purposes. Our question is, What does this mean today?"

The forums in this project will examine such questions as: Is the separation of Church and State maintained in reality? How can a genuine commitment to humankind through religion or politics stop at the boundaries of the other? If they are separated, does the disjuncture inevitably lead to the trivialization of religion and the brutalization of politics? If they are joined, how can freedom of conscience and educational freedom be maintained?

Specific issues which will be dealt with in the course of the discussions (see page 1 for specific dates) will include amnesty, abortion, gambling, women's status, environmental policies, civil religion, and other questions which lie at the boundary between religion and politics.

The Montana Forum on Church and State is a Missoula-based ad-hoc Committee which does not take positions on these issues, but rather attempts to provide a setting where differing viewpoints on Church-State issues and the role of human values in politics can be aired. Members include clergy of various faiths, professors, interest group representatives, and other interested citizens. The public is encouraged to attend and participate in these discussions. For further information, write

Howard Schwartz
%Political Science Dept.
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Missoula

Land Use Seminars in Central Montana

"We hold land as a public trust."
"I have the right to do whatever I want with my land."

Fergus and Judith Basin Counties were the scenes of heated debates, including comments such as these, as more than two hundred ranchers, farmers, and other members of surrounding communities braved blizzards and 30-below-zero January temperatures to attend Land Use seminars in Lewistown and Stanford, Montana. Questions addressed by these audiences and a panel consisting of humanist Ron Erickson, Highwood rancher Ted Lucas, realtor George Roskie of Great Falls, and water quality expert Arthur Clarkson included: What is the historic relationship between human beings and the Land? Do you as a farmer or rancher actually own land, or do you hold it in trust? How do politics and political power affect land use decisions? How does political power affect you and your ranch or farm? What can you do about it, and how? Should rural landowners be expected or required to feed wildlife at the expense of income from raising livestock or crops? Are ranchers and farmers being asked to continue a substandard income and sustain a loss for the "public good" in land use policy? What is meant by "public good"? How can people best be educated to assume responsibilities for land use?

While many panelists and audience members defended the position that private ownership and control of land is an inalienable human right, others disagreed. Professor Erickson, for example, pointed out that although the concept of possession of material things seems to be a universal human assumption, the concept of the individual's right to own land, rather than to merely use or occupy it, is one which is not accepted by all cultures. He quoted Bushmen, Eskimos, a Blackfoot Indian, and Nez Perce Chief Joseph to illustrate alternative concepts of a society's relationship to the land it uses, and to bring their perspectives to bear on current ethical dilemmas involved in land use decisions which must be made by Montanans in this decade. Quoting conservationist Aldo Leopold, Erickson called for a "land ethic" which would include the land and the natural world in our sense of community, and would explicitly recognize the interdependence and equal rights of the human and the natural worlds.

Ted Lucas and George Roskie both agreed that in many cases the

"highest use" for land in Montana will continue to be agricultural and recreational though subdividing may be more "profitable" in the short term. Lucas, and many audience members, pointed out that the unique relationship between ranchers, farmers, and the land they work is often misunderstood by the public. They stressed the larger sense of responsibility to the land and to natural processes which is experienced by those who also make their living from the land in contrast to those who merely visit it.

Project Director Herb Anderson of Raynesford reports that out of these MCH-sponsored seminars have grown a legislative study group consisting of local ranchers and farmers, and tentative plans for public discussions of the ethical responsibilities of elected officials and their accountability to their constituents, as well as plans for similar land use seminars in Great Falls and Fort Benton.

The apparent success of this series of seminars has led the MCH to encourage particularly inquiries from people in other rural areas who have ideas for public programs dealing with this year's state theme, "Political Power in Montana."

MCH Awards 15 New Grants

Fifteen grants totaling \$54,700 have been made to groups throughout Montana since the beginning of the MCH second year program:

Church and State in Montana, sponsored by the Montana Forum on Church and State, Missoula. A televised panel discussion of historical and philosophical reasons for the tension between religion and politics.

Ecology, Religion, and the American Dream, sponsored by the Christian Campus Ministries, University of Montana. Lectures and discussions of the relationship between religious morality and ecology, featuring Dr. Richard Baer.

The Democratic System of Government, sponsored by the BitterRoot Resource Conservation and Development Association in Hamilton. A series of seven public seminars with visiting academic humanists to discuss the relationship between economics and the democratic system of government.

Religion and Politics in Contemporary Life, sponsored by the Montana Forum on Church and State, Missoula. A series of eight panel discussions, described elsewhere in this newsletter, to be held January—April.

Campaign Financing—Legal Bribery or Freedom of Speech?, sponsored by Montana Common Cause. A televised debate on Montana's campaign financing laws and the humanistic aspects of political involvement in a pluralistic system, followed by a public forum in Helena to discuss questions raised by the TV program.

Solitude and Community: Making Things Work, sponsored by the English Department of the University of Montana. A week-long series of panels, readings, and discussions by prominent writers and Montana humanists, scheduled for late spring, on the topic of the relationship between the individual and his community, and the role of the artist and humanist in interpreting this relationship.

Ethical and Political Conflicts in Land Use, sponsored by an ad-hoc committee in Raynesford. Seminars in Lewistown, Stanford, Fort Benton, and Great Falls, to discuss ethical and political power conflicts in land use decisions, particularly in relation to the concerns of rural populations.

Equal Rights Amendment: Yes or No, sponsored by the Missoula Soroptimist Club. A televised discussion of the ERA, open to questions from the studio and viewing audiences.

Great Beginnings, sponsored by the American Association of University Women, Billings Coalition for Women's Rights, Yellowstone County Extension Clubs, Junior League, League of Women Voters, and Young Women's Christian Association. A workshop focusing on the consumer—energy problems of women and involving short lectures and group discussions.

Our Responsibility to Future Generations, sponsored by Planned Parenthood of Missoula, Inc. A lecture followed by a panel discussion of individual, community, state, and national responsibilities relative to population control in shaping the future.

Dilemma of the Humanist and the Scientist in Contemporary Society, sponsored by the Western Montana Scientist Institute for Public Information and the Religious Studies Department of the University of Montana. A series of four televised panel discussions.

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(NEW GRANTS, cont.)

Death in Montana, sponsored by the Five Valleys Burial-Memorial Society and the Borrowed Times Media Action Group. A three-part project to explore contemporary attitudes toward death and funeral rites and their reflection in the legal system. The programs will include a slide show, a series of symposia in Kalispell, and discussions in Helena.

A Proposal for the People, sponsored by the Community Action Program of Billings and Yellowstone County. A series of five half-hour television programs, followed by public meetings in the Spanish-speaking community to discuss the roles of minorities in a democracy.

COMMITTEE NOTES

- The Montana Committee for the Humanities has more than \$100,000 remaining in its grants budget for this year. The money is available on a matching basis to non-profit organizations in the state desiring to sponsor programs which will bring the perspectives of academic humanists to the discussion of issues related to the theme of "Political Power In Montana." For further information contact Dr. Bruce Sievers, Director, Montana Committee for the Humanities, 322 Turner Hall, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, 59801.

- The Committee will soon be considering a new theme to replace "Political Power in Montana" for next year's Public Programs in the Humanities. If you have ideas or suggestions for a theme dealing with issues of public policy in Montana, please contact any member of the Montana Committee for the Humanities, or Bruce Sievers, Director.
- A list of films and audio-visual selections from MCH-funded projects, which are available to the public free of charge, may be obtained by writing the MCH office in Missoula.

The Montana Committee for the Humanities

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